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THE FOSTER-CHILD FANTASY

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This study was designed to test the validity of the generalization made by the psycho-analysts that most or all children experience the foster-child fantasy, and to determine some further facts concerning the phenomenon. As a stage in the development of the "family romance" it is said that all or nearly all children conceive the notion that they are the children of much greater parentage. If this is so, especially as some think that it exerts much influence upon the conduct of the child, it is of great interest to students of childhood and adolescence.

The generalization seems to be well on the way toward acceptation. Abraham apparently considers it universal and sufficiently well demonstrated (1. pages 40-41). Adler refers to it as a not infrequent occurrence (2. page 206). Hall in his interpretation of Jesus' concept of divine parentage treats the foster-child fantasy as a very common experience of childhood (3. pages 251-2). Jelliffe is more daring and states that the family romance is a "universal phenomenon" (4. page 54), although he adds that any stage, and this could of course apply to the foster-child stage, may be "much abbreviated." White treats it as established in his introduction to psychoanalytic psychology (6.). Many Freudian writers, however, refer to or use the concept of the family romance with an air of certainty but without specific mention of the foster-child fantasy. Possibly they assume its existence as a part of the romance. Rank's study of the myth of the birth of the hero is most frequently given as reference (5.). Both Jelliffe and White quote Rank's presentation at length. And Rank presents the matter with apparent confidence in the conclusiveness of its demonstration. He also says that psycho-analyses are the only means of determining such traits (5. page 63).

Acceptance of the establishment of the foster-child fantasy as a common trait of childhood has hitherto depended upon the validity of conclusions from psychoanalyses, of psycho-neurotic adults mostly, some of whom died long prior to the time of the analysis. That Rank's presentation so often quoted occurs in the course of a study of mythology should

not be permitted to lead to the supposition that it is an induction from his myth data. He himself says that it is a summary of the traits of childhood discovered by Freud "from his experience with the psychology of the neuroses" (5, page 63). Whatever may be thought of the validity of generalization from such data, it must be evident that here is an opportunity for checking the results of psycho-analytic work by use of another psychological tool, the questionnaire. In fact it is for just such work as this that the questionnaire is best suited, for a census of certain human experiences. If it is true that most children wonder whether "they can really be the offspring of their prosaic parents" and develop notions about their real parentage, then it should not have entirely disappeared from voluntary recall by mid- or even later adolescent years. Hence questions presented to adolescents under circumstances calculated to arouse a sober attitude of willingness to cooperate should produce other and valuable evidence concerning the frequency and nature of the foster-child fantasy and serve at the same time as a check upon the generalization made from psycho-analyses. Such is the nature of the study here presented.

With such a purpose, the questionnaire could be very simple and direct. After many preliminary experiments it was finally used in the following form:

It has been observed that some people during childhood or youth acquire the notion that their parents are merely foster parents. The purpose of this questionnaire is to determine how common such an experience is and some facts about it.

Your sincere effort to answer the following questions accurately will be appreciated.

Negative answers if true are just as valuable as positive.

Write answers in the space following each question.

1. Age at present.

2. Sex.

3. Did you ever have the experience of day dreaming or believing that you were an adopted or foster-child, that your supposed parents were not your real parents? (Answer yes or no).

4. Was it merely a day dream or did you believe it to be true?

5. Who or what did you think that you were?

6. If you can remember what caused such thoughts, please state it as clearly as you can.

7. About how old were you at the time?

8. Did these ideas lead you to any special acts or changes of conduct? If so, please state what.

9. If you believed yourself an adopted or foster-child, about how long did the belief last?

10. Has the belief disappeared? Tell why it disappeared if you can.

11. State below any remarks or information which may be of interest concerning the matter.

This was answered by students in scientific departments of the University of Oregon and by students in the two upper classes of eight different high schools in the same state. The college students wrote under the supervision of the writer or one of his colleagues in psychology. In the high schools they were written under the supervision of the superintendent or principal, people experienced in the handling of students and here selected for their interest in research. Several of them had formerly been students in the writer's department. In order to insure as nearly perfect uniformity in the presentation of the questionnaire as possible, printed directions were supplied to all who assisted in its presentation. Care was taken to make certain that the students understood that a serious purpose existed for the questions, which otherwise might have provoked frivolity, and by this means serious answers were obtained. Out of more than nine hundred returns only five bore any indication of insincerity. However otherwise this study may be attacked the author is confident that insincerity in its data is not one of its weaknesses.

Nine hundred and twenty one returns came to the writer. Of this number five were rejected because of apparent insincerity, ten because of failure to answer some important question such as age or sex, and two more were dropped because they were actual instances of foster children. Thus the total number of returns upon which this study is based became 904. Of these 640 were from the two upper classes in the high schools and the remaining 264 were college students, mostly freshmen and sophomores. Their distribution by age and sex follows:—

AGE DISTRIBUTION

Age	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	over 25	Total
Male	2	11	38	86	68	56	44	21	13	5	5	2	7	358 or 39.6%.
Female	5	10	70	168	134	69	43	17	11	6	4	3	6	546 or 60.4%.
Total	7	21	108	254	202	125	87	38	24	11	9	5	13	904

Socially this group might best be characterized as homogeneously American. Students of foreign born parents were few and students of foreign birth rare. They came as a

rule from homes of moderate to considerable culture, identified chiefly with commercial, agricultural or professional pursuits. Extreme poverty or utter illiteracy would rarely be found.

FREQUENCY OF THE FANTASY

Question No. 3 was designed to discover the frequency of recallability of the fantasy and was worded to include with affirmative answers all degrees of belief or disbelief. It was answered by all of the 904 students participating in the study. The distribution of the answers was as follows, affirmative indicating recall of some experience with the fantasy and negative no immediate recall:—

	Male	Female	Total
Affirmative	87 or 24.3%	171 or 31.4%	258 or 28.5%
Negative	271 or 75.7%	375 or 68.6%	646 or 71.5%
Total	358	546	904

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF ANSWERS TO QUESTION NO. 3

Age.....	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	over 25	Total
Affirmative														
Male.....	1	4	8	27	13	8	13	4	3	1	3	2	2	87
Female.....	1	2	22	50	41	20	14	8	2	5	2	2	2	171
Total affirmative..	2	6	30	77	54	28	27	12	5	6	5	2	4	258
Negative														
Male.....	1	7	30	59	55	48	31	17	10	4	2	2	5	271
Female.....	4	8	48	118	93	49	29	9	9	1	2	1	4	375
Total negative...	5	15	78	177	148	97	60	26	19	5	4	3	9	646
Grand total.....	7	21	108	254	202	125	87	38	24	11	9	5	13	904

It will be observed that the median for the affirmative group is the same as for the negative group. The likeness of these distributions indicates that there is no significant change in the frequency of recallability with age, that for the mid-adolescent years at least there is no rapid suppression. The older ones recall the experience as frequently as the younger. If this phenomenon continues on into the higher ages it would be out of harmony with the psychoanalysts' assertions concerning the disappearance of childhood fantasies from voluntary recall, but the data here for the upper ages is not sufficient for generalization. It merely suggests an alluring opportunity for further research. That 28%, however, of this group of more than nine hundred young people can immediately recall having experienced the fantasy does lend considerable support to the assertions of the psychoanalysts concerning its frequency.

ATTITUDE TOWARD THE FANTASY

Preliminary experimentation and inquiry revealed that some people could recall definitely having experience with the fantasy but merely as a day dream while others had actually believed themselves foster-children. For this reason question No. 4 was designed to bring out the frequency of the two groups, but it did rather more than was expected. It led to answers which revealed many gradations of belief. Some would not even admit that it was a day dream and used expressions of which a few follow:—"I merely wondered if I might belong some place else," "Just a casual thought," "Did not believe it to be true but thought of possibilities if it was," "Merely wondered," "Merely a random thought not developed to any degree or thought of later," "Just pretending," "Just a thought that I knew at the time wasn't so," "I liked to pretend my parents were foster parents." For the lack of a better term such answers were classified below under the heading, Casual Thought. Of those who answered that they believed their fantasy to be true some added qualifying phrases which also indicate gradations on the scale of belief but at the other end of the scale from the samples just given. Here follow some of the phrases in the belief group:—"I believed that it might be true," "I perhaps believed it true," "Day dream at first later believed it to be so," "Half believed it at the time," "I believed it or rather hoped it to be true," "Perhaps I did not fully believe I had foster parents but I doubted that my parents were truly mine." But most of the answers in this group leave no room for doubt for they are such phrases as "I believed it" or "I thought it to be true." The day dream group also indicates occasionally such gradations of belief as indicated by the following quotations:—"A day dream but at times was uncertain," "Merely a day dream but thought on it a good deal," "More of a day dream rather wishing I might be some one else's child," ".... wondering how it would feel to be a foster child," "Day dream but I nearly believed it to be true," "It was dreaming I suppose and yet I often thought that perhaps I had had a different father," "Day dream afraid it might be." Below are the frequencies of the answers in tabular form.

FREQUENCY OF BELIEF IN THE FANTASY
(Answers to Question No. 4)

Belief	Male	Female	Total
Day dream	17 (19.5%)	54 (31.6%)	71 (25.4%)
Casual thought	58	101	159
No answer	12	15	27
	—	1	1
Totals	87	171	258

From this it will be seen that all but one of those who answered question No. 3 affirmatively gave some indication of their attitude toward the fantasy. Twenty five per cent of all who could recall the experience recall it as being believed at the time. More than 19% of the males believed it and more than 31% of the females. Of all the 904 answering the questionnaire 7.8% recalled experiences of the fantasy and believed it, 4.5% of all the males had it and believed it, and so did 10% of all females.

FORMS OF THE FANTASY (Answers to Question No. 5)

Answers to this question indicated several degrees of development of the fantasy. Many returns merely said "adopted child" or "Never thought that far" or other words with like meaning. Such answers are grouped in the table below under the first heading as they seem to represent an incipient or undeveloped stage of the fantasy. Then there are those, of considerable number, who thought themselves foundlings of insignificant inheritance or destitute orphans who had been taken out of pity from an asylum. A few of these answered with the single word, orphan; but most gave some qualifying phrase or word which indicated socially inferior origin. These are all grouped below under the second head. A small number very clearly stated that they thought themselves children of parentage of a similar social status (third heading in the table). Another considerable group had developed ideas of greatness. Kings, princes, great wealth, great beauty, great intellectual powers,—all these figured in the concepts of their supposed true parentage. A few thought of themselves as strange, mysterious or supernatural beings, using these very adjectives on their returns, and they are so described in the table. It may be worth while to add that these few did not all come from any one community but from different parts of the state, thereby eliminating the possibility of collusion. Then there were those who recalled the fluctuating nature of the fantasy and report themselves as thinking of now one and now another type of person. Under Miscellaneous and Indefinite are presented those who gave such answers as "Kidnapped," "Traded by mistake," etc. making them otherwise unclassifiable. The frequency of occurrence of each group is indicated below as well as the percentage which the total of that group is of the entire number answering this question.

	Male	Female	Total
Incipient stage of fantasy (No clear concept)	47	75	122 or 54%
Orphan or foundling	7	26	33 or 15%
Parentage of similar social status	2	5	7 or 3%
Child of great parentage (Great wealth 20, royalty or nobility 11, miscellaneous 9)	8	32	40 or 18%
Strange, mysterious or supernatural being	4	1	5 or 2%
Many different characters	4	6	10 or 4%
Miscellaneous and indefinite	2	5	7 or 3%
Totals	74	150	224

Of the two hundred and fifty eight people whose answers to Question No. 3 indicated experience of the fantasy, two hundred and twenty-four or 87% answered this question. It was answered by 85% of the males and 88% of the females who answered No. 3 affirmatively.

CAUSES OFFERED FOR THE FANTASY

The following table summarizes the answers to question No. 6 and in most instances the items are in the words of the questionnaire returns. The percentage figures indicate the per cent which the accompanying figure is of the total number of that class answering this question. (Totals here cannot be checked with totals in other tables because here some give more than one answer).

	Male	Female	Total
1. Suggestion:			
Books, stories, etc., and the hearing and seeing of actual instances of foster parentage.	30 (43%)	66 (46%)	96 or 45%
2. Dissatisfaction:			
Limitations of home, longing for wealth, discontent.	1 (1%)	9 (6%)	10 or 5%
3. Mistreatment (Actual or supposed):			
Harshness, partiality, teasing, fault finding, inconsistent treatment, desire for affection, lack of respect for parents.	19 (27%)	34 (24%)	53 or 25%
4. Peculiar Family Circumstances:			
Prolonged absence from parents, parental disagreement, great difference in children's ages, family quarrels, previous marriage of one parent.	2 (3%)	5 (3%)	7 or 3%
5. Accidental Causes:			
Parent misunderstanding child, misunderstanding of adult remarks.	1 (1%)	3 (2%)	4 or 2%

	Male	Female	Total
6. Activity of Mind (Instinct to think): Precocious philosophizing, mere play of imagination, much alone, nothing to do.	11 (16%)	16 (11%)	27 or 13%
7. Growth Stimulus: Early adolescent development, desire for the different.	1 (1%)	2 (1%)	3 or 1%
8. Absence of family resemblance, mental and physical.	3 (4%)	13 (9%)	16 or 7%
9. Miscellaneous: Praise with ulterior motive, self pity, lure of elsewhere or of the wild, mood, circumstances, desire for older brother, vivid dream.	7 (10%)	2 (1%)	9 or 4%
10. Unable to recall.	5 (7%)	13 (9%)	18 or 8%

Of those giving affirmative answers to question No. 3, 214 or 83% answered this question. Of these, 70 were males or 80% of the males answering question No. 3; and 144 were females or 84%. In only two instances is there a noticeable difference here between the sexes. Absence of family resemblances seems to be more significant for the girls and there is a similar preponderance of boys in the group called mental activity or the manifestation of the instinct to think. In passing it is interesting also to observe that all of the ten cases under dissatisfaction had ideas of greatness in their fantasies. This will be discussed further in the next section.

RELATION OF FANTASY FORMS TO CAUSES GIVEN

Observing almost as many reporting notions of inferior parentage as there were of those reporting ideas of greatness, with other indications of developmental stages of the fantasy already mentioned, it seemed possible that a segregation of the causes which each of these groups offered might also be productive. The results of this segregation appear in the following table:—

	Orphan or Foundling Group	Ideas of Greatness
Suggestion	19 or 58%	12 or 30%
Dissatisfaction	0	10 or 25%
Mistreatment	5 or 15%	6 or 15%
Miscellaneous and Indefinite	9 or 27%	12 or 30%

The most conspicuous thing appearing in this comparison is the complete absence of dissatisfaction causes in the "orphan group" and its emphatic presence in the "greatness group." Mistreatment is about equally influential in the two forms of the fantasy, and suggestive causes are given much

more frequently for explanation of the fantasy by those in the "orphan group" than by those in the "greatness group." For help in grasping the meaning of these likenesses and differences reference should be made to the presentation of data concerning the forms of the fantasy. There will be found indications of stages of development, as was also suggested in the answers to the question concerning belief in the fantasy. Following this suggestion of a developing fantasy the table just presented would seem to indicate that mistreatment and suggestion first give rise to the idea of foster-parent-hood which early takes the form of orphanage or inferiority of some sort, perhaps assisted by feelings of helplessness or inferiority in the face of supposed ill usage or partiality for other children. Then with the continuation of the fantasy, growth and the vigor of approaching adolescence come ideas of greatness, doubtless again assisted by the suggestive causes mentioned, and reflection on these ideas of greatness might be the reason for the appearance of the alleged dissatisfaction causes in the "greatness group," the dissatisfaction thus being more consequence than cause. This seems much more likely than that the ideas of greatness should come first and with continuation of the fantasy the dissatisfaction disappear. Comparison with the complete table presenting all causes alleged will show all dissatisfaction cases are found in this table correlated with ideas of greatness, whereas only a small number of the suggestion cause cases and mistreatment cause cases are found here. All dissatisfaction cases in this study had ideas of greatness. Such a statement would be far from the truth for any of the other cause groups. It will be further observed that while the miscellaneous and indefinite group is a considerable percentage of the whole only a most improbable distribution of them, if more definite answers were obtainable, could alter the relationships between the groups.

AGE TO WHICH FANTASY IS ATTRIBUTED
(Answers to Question No. 7)

The following table presents the ages which 240 of the 258 people who had recallable experience with the fantasy mention as being the approximate time of its occurrence:—

Ages	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	Indefinite or No Answer	Total
Males	1	2	5	5	7	5	20	5	10	3	7	3	2	2	10	87
Females	5	8	10	11	28	18	26	7	21	11	6	7	3	2	8	171
Total	6	10	15	16	35	23	46	12	31	14	13	10	5	4	18	258

It will be observed that definite answers were obtained from 93% of the group. Medians for both the male and the female distributions fall in the ten year group. This is undoubtedly too low because of the method used in tabulation. Some gave a definite figure, some said about a certain age and of course in these instances the figure given was used. But there were also many who answered in terms of an approximate range of years, as for example "About ten to twelve." Where this was done the tabulation was by the lowest figure given. Thus the actual measure of central tendency is higher than ten years, probably between ten and twelve years. Of course these are only rough approximations, but it must be remembered that most of these are approximations by young people not very far removed from the period in question, by young people still in their adolescent years (the median for the entire group studied being 18 years).

EFFECTS OF THE FANTASY UPON CONDUCT
(Answers to Question No. 8)

In this table are presented in summarized manner the answers to that question which sought to discover if any considerable number could recall influences of the fantasy upon their behavior, and in the event of there being such what the nature of the conduct effects might be. Of course the table is based upon the answers of those who had in response to question No. 3 indicated recallable experience with the fantasy.

	Male	Female	Total
No answer given	15 or 17%	27 or 16%	42 or 16%
No conduct effect recalled	55 or 63%	84 or 49%	139 or 54%
Some effect reported (See next table)	17 or 20%	60 or 35%	77 or 30%
Totals	87	171	258

It is worthy of note that this question was answered positively or negatively by 83% of the males and 84% of the females, or 84% of the group reporting experience with the fantasy.

The 77 people or 30% above who reported that the fantasy did have some effect upon their conduct, which they could recall, describe the effect in various ways but with sufficient clarity to make possible an effective grouping. It appears in the table following:—

NATURE OF THE CONDUCT EFFECTS		Number	Per Cent
Deliberative thought, seeking proof, meditation, etc.		26	34%
Depressing emotional reactions:—			
Melancholy, embarrassment, fright, etc.		6	8%
Domesticating conduct:—			
Expression of greater affection for parents (1), conscious imitation of parents (1), improved conduct (1), more considerate conduct (2).		5	6%
Alienating conduct (from parents):—			
Teasing, tormenting, deceitful, disobedient, re- vengeful, etc. toward parents (7).			
Stimulated independence of conduct, running away considered and carried out, or more self confident (9).			
Acting part of supposed real self (4)			
Reserved toward parents (4).			
Telling of the discovery (3).			
Seeking discovery by real parents (1).			
Deliberately acting in strange manner (1).			
Suspicious, sulky, saucy, snobbish, etc. (8).		37	50%
Miscellaneous (Poetic efforts, and disinclination to study).		2	3%
Positive but indefinite		1	—

The sub-topics in the table just presented are in most instances words and phrases taken directly from the questionnaire returns. In the recollection of these students the predominating effect of the foster-child fantasy upon conduct, or at least its conduct concomitant, is conspicuously that of alienation from the parents. This is of course in clearest harmony with the family romance generalizations of the psycho-analysts. The seeking of proof and meditative thought might be considered as a stage preliminary to the alienation in the fully developed phenomenon. So also the depressing emotional experiences reported. But the tendencies classed above as domesticating indicate a tendency in the other direction. Of course the writer is quite well aware that these may not be effects of the fantasy at all but merely growth concomitants, perhaps causing the fantasy. The writer is here merely seeking and presenting the opinions of his subjects.

As before, the returns in the "orphan group" and the "greatness group" were then isolated and the answers each gave to the question concerning conduct effects was tabulated according to the rubrics just used in order that any significant group peculiarities might again be revealed. The result was as follows:—

Effect Reported	Orphan Group	Greatness Group
Deliberative thought, etc.	6 or 18%	2 or 5%
Depressing emotion	2 or 6%	...
Domesticating conduct	3 or 9%	...
Alienating conduct	7 or 21%	13 or 32%
No conduct effect reported	13 or 40%	17 or 43%
No answer given	2 or 6%	8 or 20%

The great difference between the percentages of the two groups giving no answer to the question makes any generalizations from the other differences hazardous. The other differences suggest, however, a trend away from deliberative thought, depressing emotion and domesticating conduct (early stages perhaps of the fantasy) toward alienating conduct.

DURATION OF THE FANTASY BELIEVED
(Answers to Question No. 9)

People answering the questionnaire who had actually believed themselves to be foster children were asked to indicate as nearly as possible how long the belief continued. The following table summarizes their estimates:—

	Male	Female	Total	Per cent
No answer or too indefinite for use	4	8	12	17%
Very brief time (few minutes to few days)	6	11	17	24%
"Three months," "four months", or "few months".	2	5	7	10%
About one year	2	4	6	8%
About two years	1	13	14	20%
About three years	1	6	7	10%
About four years	..	3	3	..
About five years	..	1	1	..
"Several years"	..	3	3	..
About fifteen years (prolonged separation from parents).	1	..	1	..
Totals	17	54	71	

Some indicated in their answers that the belief was intermittent by the phrase "off and on" for the time specified. The long duration of the believed fantasy is a little surprising. Thirty five or 49% think the belief endured for a year or in some cases much more. It is also of interest that the question was answered in a specific manner by 83% of those reporting belief in the fantasy. Generalizations from these figures would, however, be unreliable because of inconsistencies in reporting. The experience was apparently spasmodic or recurrent with many; and in answer to this question some gave

an estimate of the period within which these recurrences came, while others gave merely the approximate duration of a single occurrence.

DISAPPEARANCE OF THE BELIEF

The tenth question revealed that as a firm belief the fantasy had disappeared in all cases; although two or three report a lingering influence well described in the phrase of the one who said, "At times it seems to haunt me."

The second part of the question asked why the belief had disappeared, of course seeking the opinion of those answering. The answers to this appear in the following table:—

REASONS GIVEN FOR DISAPPEARANCE OF BELIEVED FANTASY

	Male	Female	Total	Per cent
Growth and development of intelligence, recognition of absurdity of belief, discovery that others had experienced the same thoughts.	9	24	33	46%
Parental intimacy (parental confidence, assurance and explanations and parental affection).	4	17	21	30%
Discovery of proof (Observation of family resemblances, discovery of records, etc.)	..	12	12	17%
Miscellaneous (One vague answer, one where aspects of belief failed to materialize).	..	3	3	..

The numbers in this table refer to the number of times each reason was mentioned. As some were mentioned more than once the numbers will not of course check with the other tables. The percentages are based on the number who believed their fantasy, that is 71. This question was answered by 83% of them in a definite manner. The others did not answer or said they were unable to do so.

COMPARISON WITH RESULTS OF PSYCHOANALYSES

That inquiry of more than nine hundred young people should reveal twenty-eight per cent who could immediately recall experience with the foster-child fantasy supports the Freudians at the outset. To this number ought of course to be added all those who could immediately recall the experience, those who had it and with whom it is now beyond even mediate recall (instances of which with adequate proof have come to the

writer's attention aside from those here studied), and those in whom it may have suffered a psychoneurotic suppression. Of course such an addition cannot be made in terms of figures; but the mention of such cases indicates the minimal nature of the twenty eight per cent discovered by this study. Thus considered the number is sufficiently large to warrant the assertion that it is a common experience of childhood. So far the psychoanalytic generalization has been justified. And a more definite statement can now be substituted for Rank's that "many persons . . . very frequently remember occasions of this (foster-child) kind."

From psychoanalytic studies the foster-child fantasy was located in the pre-adolescent years (Freud's period of sexual latency or Jung's pre-sexual period). The two hundred and fifty-eight young people found in this study to have had recallable experience with the fantasy located it in the same period of development. The median of the answers given fell between the ages of ten and twelve years. The years eight to twelve inclusive covered 61% of the answers.

Taking Rank's oft quoted statement of the course of the family romance as the authoritative presentation for the psychoanalysts one finds in addition to the basic parental detachment motive of the romance the mention of two immediate causes of the foster-child fantasy, feelings of parental neglect or lack of affection and romantic literature. These two immediate causes have been amply verified by the results of this study. They were the two causes most frequently mentioned by these young people. But there has also been brought to light certain other supplementary causes, not mentioned by Rank, which in the minds of these subjects are of some importance. They are prolonged absence from the parents, marital infelicity observed by the children, precocious philosophizing, lack of companionship and the absence of mental or physical resemblance to the parents. The last is of peculiar interest not only because it is so common a topic of discussion before children but also because the subsequent development of family resemblances is several times mentioned in these returns as a cause for the decline of belief in the fantasy. One of those who had never experienced the fantasy remarked that "the reason I have never acquired such a notion is the fact that all my life every one has spoken of the great resemblance I have for my father."

Rank presents the fantasy as undergoing development from an early stage in which the child thinks of himself as an adopted or step-child to the higher stage characterized by expansive ideas, variously elaborated according to the child's adroitness

and the material at his disposal. This questionnaire study not only supports but also considerably elaborates the psychoanalytic conclusion. All through the returns there are indications of the developmental stages of the fantasy. Concerning the forms of the fantasy there were those, a large group, who had but the vaguest if any idea beyond the thought of foster-childhood, some saying that they had never thought further than that. Then there were those who reported thinking themselves as different characters at different times. The apparent relationship of the different form groups (incipiency, orphan, same social status, great parentage, supernatural being) suggests the same thing. The relationship of forms to causes carefully tabulated indicated the developmental interpretation of the fantasy as the only feasible explanation of the otherwise strange distribution of causes mentioned. The relation of the forms to the reported conduct effects pointed, if less clearly, in the same direction. Examination of the conduct effects indicated stages from meditation on a more or less fascinating idea to decidedly alienating conduct. Degrees of belief also appeared very clearly in the answers given. Even without knowledge of the psychoanalysts conclusions it would have been difficult if not impossible to have interpreted this data otherwise. And the conclusion is in harmony also with the known traits of childhood imaginative fancy as well as the growth of delusions in paranoia.

The forms of the fantasy named herein revealed not only the two mentioned by Rank but also another equally prominent, that of inferior parentage, which seems to lie between the two because it has a definite form and the incipient stage lacks definition. The few cases of fantasies of parentage of similar social status hint at another intermediary stage, decidedly harmonic with the concept of an outward tending libido, which might follow the inferiority stage. And the few cases of those who conceived themselves as of supernatural or very mysterious nature might point to a still higher development of the fantasy, rising to heights above mere concepts of worldly greatness as in paranoid delusions. If true this might be of much interest to those attempting to apply psychoanalytic concepts to the interpretation of the founders of religion. But the writer is far from confident that the last two are genuine stages in the development of the fantasy. The number of cases is small and they might prove to be merely circumstantially conditioned variants from the normal course. For the inferiority stage, however, in which the child thinks of himself as a foundling or poor asylum orphan, following the earlier or incipient stage in which there is no con-

cept beyond the thought of foster-childhood, there is sufficient evidence in the data presented. Of course the demonstration of a stage in the course of the fantasy characterized by inferiority concepts immediately reminds one of Adler, and it might be that ideas of greatness develop as compensations for these inferiority concepts which doubtless are accompanied by feelings of inferiority.

In considering the forms of the fantasy it is interesting to notice Rank's statement concerning the sources of the ideas of greatness. He says: "The child utilizes an accidental coincidence of actual happenings (meetings with the lord of the manor, or the proprietor of the estate, in the country; with the reigning prince, in the city. In the United States with some great statesman, millionaire)" (5, page 65). To the writer there is in that quotation the implication that in this country the fantasy is less likely to take the form of royalty or nobility. Perhaps this is so, but as a matter of fact eleven of the forty cases of expansive ideas, here studied were found to have the form of princes, kings or nobles. The appeal of non-democratic institutions is apparently not dead in the minds of American children.

As has been so often presented in the psychoanalytic literature, the principal motive of the family romance is the progressive detachment from the parents. Rank points out that revenge and retaliation motives also appear in the course of the romance, but considers them as stimuli for further imagings, further developments of the fantasy. The progressive detachment from the parents was clearly indicated in the writer's returns from those who recalled changes in conduct at the time of the fantasy. Many mentioned much thought about the matter and the deliberate seeking of proof for their notions, some wrote of depressing emotions as the consequence of their fantasy, a still smaller number state that they were moved to better behavior and greater affection for their parents (a domesticating tendency), but by far the larger number reported instigation to conduct which would inevitably alienate them from parental influence. The general direction of the conduct effect (or concomitant conduct) was clearly away from parental authority in the recollection of these adolescents. The few who mention a domesticating tendency may indicate a slight hesitation to take the plunge into independence, a slight oscillation at the outset before fixation of growth direction is established. The many reports also of revengeful and retaliatory conduct, the conscious tormenting of the parents, harmonizes perfectly with Rank's statements.

In fine this study seems to have resulted in an amplification as well as a justification of the results of psychoanalytic investigation. Psychoanalytic conclusions concerning the foster-child fantasy have stood the test of checking by a different method of research. At the same time it throws doubt upon the statement of Rank that the psychoanalysis of psycho-neurotics is the only tool by which the imaginings of childhood may be studied (5. page 63). It is possible that the questionnaire might by itself never have discovered the foster-child fantasy and the family romance, but this study has demonstrated its usefulness as a tool for the checking of the results of psychoanalytic study and also for their amplification. Rank has compared psychoanalysis with empirical observation, but the questionnaire as used here is not empirical observation. It approaches in its request for free personal recollection much nearer to the anamneses of psychoanalysis and has the advantage of being able to bring data readily from numbers large enough to permit of statistical treatment.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The foster-child fantasy has been demonstrated to be a common experience of childhood. Twenty-eight per cent of the 904 returns here tabulated could immediately recall experience with it.

Twenty five per cent of those who reported experience with the fantasy (7.8% of all) believed in it as a correspondence with facts. The others expressed many varieties of attitude from partial belief to none at all.

Three stages of development of the fantasy were indicated. In 54% the fantasy had never taken any definite form, 15% thought of themselves as poor orphans or foundlings, 18% had developed ideas of greatness. Two other stages were suggested in the returns but by numbers too small for generalization.

Suggestion (45%) and supposed mistreatment (25%) are most frequently given by those questioned as causes for the fantasy. But other causes, although less frequent, were indicated sufficiently often to deserve consideration; precocious thinking (13%), lack of physical or mental family resemblance (7%), and dissatisfaction with home conditions (5%).

The fantasy is located by more than half of those reporting in the period of 8 to 12 years of age.

The most common effect of the fantasy recalled, as described by these subjects, is conduct alienating them from parental influence and authority.

The duration of the fantasy for those who had actually believed themselves foster-children was reported to be more than a year by 49% (maximum 15 years). It was reported as of very brief duration by 24%, and as lasting a few months by 10%.

Growth and the development of intelligence is most often mentioned as the cause of the removal of the fantasy among those who had believed it, but there are two thirds as many mentions of parental intimacy and a smaller number reporting discovery of convincing proof, such as physical or mental similarities and actual records.

Comparison with the psychoanalytic presentation, especially that by Rank, results in both support and amplification of the generalizations from psychoanalysis. The frequency of the fantasy, the age location of it, causes given, two stages of its development, and the progressive detachment from the parents are alike in the results from both methods of study. The questionnaire method has, however, added the discovery of other causes, another stage in its development, some modification of statements concerning sources of the fantasy forms, and has revealed itself to be a serviceable supplement to psychoanalysis.

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The writer desires here to publicly express his appreciation of the earnest and expert assistance supplied him by the following officers of Oregon's public schools in collecting the data upon which the foregoing study is based:—C. A. Howard of Eugene, A. C. Strange of Baker, George Hug of McMinnville, A. G. Smith of Roseburg, C. R. Bowman of Klamath Falls, Naomi Williamson of La Grande, R. W. Glass of Cottage Grove, and P. E. Baker of Medford.